

The National Tribune

A Monthly Journal devoted to the interests of the Soldiers and Sailors of the late war, and all Pensioners of the United States.

Published by The
NATIONAL TRIBUNE COMPANY.

VOL. II, No. 3.

WASHINGTON, D. C., MARCH, 1879.

TERMS, FIFTY CENTS PER YEAR.
Specimen Copies sent Free on Request.

Entered according to Act of Congress, in the year of our Lord, 1878, in the Office of the Librarian of Congress, at Washington, D. C.

"The Pride of Battery B."

South Mountain towered on our right,
Far off the river lay,
And over on the wooded height,
We held their lines at bay.

At last, the muttering guns were still,
The day died slow and wan;
At last the gunners' pipes did fall,
The sergeant's yarns began.

When as the wind a moment blew
Aside the fragrant flood,
Our briar-woods raised—within our view
A little maiden stood:

A tiny tot of six or seven,
From fireside fresh she seemed,
(Of such a little one in heaven,
One soldier often dreamed.)

And as we stared, her little hand
Went to her curly head
In grave salute—"And who are you?"
At length the sergeant said:

"And where's your home?" he growled again;
She lisped out: "Who is me?"
Why, don't you know? I'm little Jane,
The Pride of Battery B."

"My home? Why, that was burned away,
And Pa and Ma are dead,
And so I ride the guns all day,
Along with sergeant Ned:

"And I've a drum that's not a toy
And a cap with feathers, too,
And I march beside the drummer boy,
On Sundays at review.

"But now our 'bacca's all give out,
The men can't have their smoke;
And so they're cross—why, even Ned
Won't play with me and joke.

"And the big Colonel said to-day—
I hate to hear him swear—
He'd 'give a leg for a good pipe,
Like the Yanks had over there."

"And so I thought when beat the drum
And the big guns were still,
I'd creep beneath the tent and come
Out here across the hill:

"And beg good master Yankee man,
You'd give me some 'Lone Jack'—
Please, do—when we get some again,
I'll surely bring it back:

"Indeed I will, for Ned—says he,
'If I do what I say,
I'll be a general yet, may be,
And ride a prancing bay.'"

We brimmed her tiny apron o'er;
You should have heard her laugh,
As each man, from his scanty store,
Shook out a generous half.

To kiss the little mouth stooped down
A score of grimy men,
Until the sergeant's husky voice
Said, "Tention, squad!" and then—

We gave her escort till "Good night!"
The pretty wail we bid,
And watched her toddle out of sight
Or else 'twas tears that hid.

Her tiny form, nor turned about
A man, nor spoke a word,
Till after while a far hoarse shout
Upon the wind we heard.

We sent it back—then cast sad eye
Upon the scenes around,
A baby's hand had touched the tie,
That brothers once had bound.

That's all—save when the dawn awoke
Again the work of hell;
And through the sullen clouds of smoke
The screaming missiles fell.

Our general often rubbed his glass,
And marveled much to see
Not a single shell, that whole day fell
In the camp of Battery B.

*We shall continue to publish in the TRIBUNE the choice poetry of the war, and here is "The Pride of Battery B," which, as an adornment for any scrap-book, is worth a year's subscription to our paper.

The Warrior's Shield.

BY SOPHIA LYNE.

She buckled on his sword, and said,
"Now God defend the right,
And bless my warrior, and bring
Him safely from the fight!"
She did not shed a single tear,
She watched him ride away,
Yet all her hope—her very life—
Went with him to the fray.

At eve she stood upon the hill,
"Ah, whither do ye fly?"
Oh, tell me—tell me of the war!"
"The battle's won!" they cry.
"But who is this they are bringing home,
A warrior, and dead?"
"Alas! alas! it is thy love,"
A soldier, pitying, said.

She did not turn to see his face,
She did not weep or sigh,
She only said, "Since he is dead,
What can I do but die?"
"It is not I!" a deep voice said,
"Though foremost in the field,
Yet I am safe, my own sweet love,
Your blessing was my shield."

MORE timber is used under ground in the Comstock lode than has been employed in the construction of San Francisco.

JOHN PHOENIX AND JEFF. DAVIS.

A New Story told of the Greatest of American Humorists.

A New York correspondent of the Indianapolis Journal gives the following interesting reminiscence of the late John Phoenix—Lieutenant Derby, of the United States Army.

When Frank Pierce was President, Jeff. Davis, then Secretary of War, issued a general invitation to officers of the Army who were skillful draughtsmen, to send in suggestions for the new uniform which it had been decided to adopt. One such invitation was sent to each officer. Lieutenant Derby was very ready with his pen—a really ingenious artist. In reply, he sent to the War Department a design for a new uniform, or rather a peculiar addition to the old uniform, the amendment consisting merely of a ring attached to the seat of the trousers of each private soldier. Each officer was to carry, instead of a sword, a long pole with a hook in the end like a shepherd's crook. The pole and the ring enabled officers to keep the privates from running away in battle. Fugitives could easily be caught by it and brought back. Stragglers could be kept in line. Moreover, the ring would be very useful in the cavalry service, to fasten soldiers to the saddle to prevent them from falling off; and in the artillery service, the rings were to be used for draught purposes in the absence of mules.

These specifications were accompanied by the most grotesque pictures, representing officers hauling back cowardly recruits by the serviceable ring, cavalry securely fastened to the top of their steeds by the same device, and artillerymen harnessed to cannon, drawing them through narrow defiles, or up an acclivity inaccessible to mules, by cables attached to the posterior staples.

On another sheet of Bristol-board was an illustration, in gaudy colors, of "Derby's Rotary Mule Howitzer," accompanied by the following description: "Upon the back of a young and vigilant mule, strap a mountain howitzer, the muzzle pointing toward the tail. A similar piece of ordnance is fastened with iron bands under the animal's abdomen, the muzzle aimed between his fore legs to the front. There are four gunners, two to each piece, and a 'persuader,' as he is called, whose business it is to persuade the mule to stand firm and not retreat, by stuffing him with oats, after each discharge, with a tin sausage-stuffer. When Indians, or other legitimate game, appear in view, the mule is, by a crank movement on the tail, limbered to the front. It don't matter which way the mule face, (and here is where my patent comes in,) one gun is always pointing toward the front. At the command 'Fire!' the top howitzer is discharged. The recoil throws the mule on his back, bringing the second gun into position. This is discharged, which suddenly throws the mule to his feet again, when the gunners swab out the mule's throat with hay, and reload." The accompanying illustrations (in brown, red, blue, and gold, and still on file in the War Department) represented the rotary mule in seven different attitudes, looking contented and happy all the time.

This was felt to be outrageous audacity on the part of a subaltern. The clerks in the War Department laughed at the funny letter immoderately, but their superiors looked serious. Jefferson Davis, the head of the Department, was terribly indignant, and he resolved to defend his wounded dignity. Charges and specifications were drawn up against Lieutenant Derby, and the officers were actually named for his court-martial, when Wm. L. Marcy, Secretary of State, said to the irate Secretary: "Now, see here, Gen. Davis, don't do it. This Derby has undoubtedly a superfluous development of humor. But he is shrewd and ingenious, and really a fine draughtsman. He has valuable qualities. You can organize a court that will convict him, but you will be a butt of ridicule on account of it all your life. Better file the suggestions of the crook and ring and the lively rotary mule, and say nothing." And he did.

What's one Bullet to a Basketful?

An incident occurred in the battle of Franklin which I have never seen in print. That sanguinary battle was at its height, and now and then there was a soldier who would not face the music, and, holding to the idea that "distance lends enchantment" on all such occasions, would exhibit his faith in the idea by taking "leg bail" for the rear. These cases were getting too numerous toward the close of the battle, and Col. B——, of our brigade, was sent back to the rear to intercept those seeking for safety and return them to their respective posts of duty.

Col. B—— said he hailed one fellow who was making tracks for some place of safety, with all the energy of despair.

"Halt! I say, and return to your command!"
The flying son of Mars took no notice of the command.

"Halt! I say, and go back to your post!"
The soldier paid no attention to him.

The colonel now became exasperated, and yelled out:
"If you don't turn and go back to your command, I will shoot you, sir!"

Without pausing in his flight the soldier yelled back at him:

"Shoot and be hanged! What's one bullet to a basketful?"

Col. B—— let him go, and after the battle told the incident as a good joke.—*Exchanges.*

American Titles.

The founders of our republican form of government provided in the Constitution against granting any patents of nobility to her citizens, and on reading the earlier records of our history you will find that even the one regarded as "first in peace, first in war, and first in the hearts of his countrymen," was spoken and written of as "George Washington, Esquire," an humble distinction such as belonged to every English gentleman at the time.

Behold the change! Now we give our President and Governor the title of "Excellency," and our member of Congress that of "Honorable."

This is all contrary to the intention of the framers of the Constitution, as the debates thereon will show, and decidedly anti-democratic.

During our late civil war military titles were so abundant that I have heard the story told of a certain gentleman entering a saloon where twenty men were seated, and looking towards them, remarking as he walked to the bar:—"Colonel, what'll you drink?" when nineteen of them rose, came up to the bar, and said: "Whisky, thank you!"

Well, while at Camp Butler, Ill., an amusing instance of the tenacity with which men will cling to their titles came under my notice. You see our camp was a depot for officers on the way to join their regiments, for newly enlisted recruits, and for prisoners of war. Of the latter we had some five or six thousand, captured at Fort Donaldson and Island No. 10.

One day while riding out a few miles from the camp I was saluted by a man who gave his name as George Sykes, and who stated he had heard by letter from the South that his cousin was a prisoner of war with us. He said he would like to know if such was the fact, and I told him if he would come over soon I would try to learn if his kinsman was in our custody. About a week afterwards he did arrive, though I was absent at the time, but shortly succeeding his visit, I met him on the road again. He related then his experience while seeking his cousin, which I will endeavor to give in his own language:

"You see, Cap"—he was exceedingly familiar with me from the start—"a week or so arter I seed you I ded go over to yore camp ter hunt fur John Simmons, my cousin, if he wuz a prisoner o' war thar, and arter I'd axed fur you, an' a darky boy who knowed you, sed he'd seed you ride outen the camp. I turned and sed to a blue-coated chap—I guessed he mought be a corpor'al—[I should state that few of the officers then wore more than undress uniforms]—and sez I ter him, 'Good mornin', corpor'al; duz you know John Simmons, my cousin, wot's a priz'ner o' war here?' The feller jist looked at me squaw in the face, an' sez he, 'Wot duz you mean, greeny, a callin' me corpor'al? I'm none uv yore corpor'als—I'm a sergeant!' an' he wheeled off sharp an' left me. Well, then I went on furdur into the grounds, an' purty soon I thought I'd ax agin, an' so I did of a soldier az wuz walkin' by, an' sez I:—'Good mornen', sergeant; duz you know John Simmons, my cousin, wot's a priz'ner o' war here?' Wot an eye he put on me, shore, an' sez he, 'Looker here, you clod-hopper, yore out o' yore reck'nin'; I'm no sergeant—I'm a lieutenant, duz you hear that?' and off he went. Well, thinks I to myself, this duzent look much like finden' John Simmons; howsumdover I'll 'quire furdur, an' purty soon I ventured to ax a high steppen' feller, an' sez I ter him, 'Good mornen', lieutenant; duz you know John Simmons, my cousin, wot's a priz'ner o' war here?' Wuzen't that ar man mad when he sed, 'I'm no lieutenant, sir; I'm a captain; you and your cousin be d—d, an' I got nothen' more outen him. I, too, was riled, but I wanted to find John Simmons, my cousin, so I tuk his sass. Purty soon I seed a man who looked as if he mought know suthen', a leanen' agin a barrick; so I came up ter him, an' sez I, 'Good mornen', captain; duz you know John Simmons, my cousin, wot's a priz'ner o' war here?' How savage that ar feller looked when he sorter hissed it out: 'Sir, yore a cursed fool; I'm no captain, I'm a major, you jackass!' an' away he went. I felt wicked an' sorter discouraged, but I came to find John Simmons, my cousin, so I 'tarmined to 'quire furdur, an' purty soon I tackled a big, red-whiskered chap a struttin' roun', an' sez I, 'Good mornen', major; duz you know John Simmons, my cousin, wot's a priz'ner o' war here?' I golly, that ar feller wuz outen humor right off, for sez he, 'Major! major! You infernal fool, to call me a major; I'm a colonel, sir—a colonel!' an' off he strutted. Well, sez I to myself, George Sykes, this duzent look much az ef you'd find John Simmons, yore cousin, wot's a priz'ner o' war here. I stood looken' roun' an' roun', and bimeby I seen a feller I jist tuck a shine ter at wunst. He wuz a setten' on a hoss block a few rods off; so I walked ter him, an' this time I 'termined ter give him a big name, shore, so sez I, 'Good mornen' general;—I tuck off my hat an' bowed mighty low—duz you know John Simmons, my cousin, wot's a priz'ner o' war here?' How the feller laughed, ter be shore. 'General! general!' said he. 'Why, my good man, I'm jist a private!' 'Well, well, well,' said I, 'I'll be d—d ef you hain't the fust private I've seen in this 'ere camp, an' the oney man who's got a d—d bit o' sense!'

He wuz a mighty 'bligin' chap, that ar private, an' he found John Simmons, my cousin, wot wuz a priz'ner o' war thar."

An Irishman accosted a gentleman on the street late at night with a request for the time. The gentleman suspecting that Pat wished to snatch his watch, gave him a stinging rap on the nose, with the remark, "It has just struck one!" "Be jabbers," retorted Pat, "I'm glad I didn't ax yez an hour ago."